over the country in a definite time-frame of three years.

Pooyankutty Hydro-Electric Project

*456. PROF. SAVITHRI LAKSHMANAN : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government of Kerala has requested to the Union Government to release 300 hectares of forest land for the Pooyankutty Hydro-Electric Project; and

(b) if so, the reaction of the Union Government thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH) : (a) and (b) A proposal for diversion of 3001.8 hectares of forest land for Pooyankutty Hydro-Electric Project was received from the State Government of Kerala in July, 1987. After careful consideration of all aspects the State Government was informed about inability to give approval for the diversion.

Job Opportunities to Handicapped Persons

*457. SHRI Bh. VIJAYA KUMAR RAJU : Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) the steps taken by the Government to provide job opportunities to the physically handicapped persons;

(b) whether the Government propose to exempt them from the examination conducted by the Staff Selection Commission and to give them jobs directly;

(c) whether the employment exchanges can provide them jobs according to their educational qualifications; and

(d) whether the Government propose to raise reservation of three per cent for providing them more employment ?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI SITARAM KESRI) : (a) (i) The Government of India have reserved 3% of vacancies against identified posts in Group 'C' and Group 'D' for the physically handicapped persons. The categories of handicapped persons benefited by this scheme are the Blind, the Deaf and the Orthopaedically handicapped, each category getting 1% reservation in Central Government services.

(ii) 23 Special Employment Exchanges, 55 Special Cells in normal Employment Exchanges and 17 Vocational Rehabilitation Centres for physically handicapped persons have been set up to assist handicapped persons in securing gainful employment.

(iii) Special recruitment drives for filling up the backlog of reserved posts in respect of Group 'C' and 'D' posts for blind and deaf have been conducted by Staff Selection Commission.

(iv) Voluntary Organisations are being assisted through grants for education, training and rehabilitation of the handicapped.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) The Employment Exchanges sponsor registered candidates for employment who fulfil the qualifications and other requirements of posts notified to them by employers such as